**THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK**

**Department of English**

**and**

**Division of Humanities**

**PRESENT**

THE 44TH ANNUAL

**Spring Poetry**

**Festival**

HIGH SCHOOL WINNERS

\* \* \*

MAY 13TH, 2016

**Honorable Mention**

A HERALD’S VERSE

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?

The verse on which our hopes emerge?

The mythic warriors are heralds of your sonnets;

They cherish your verse that triggers to connate.

Have you ever composed ‘the verse?’

The verse on which our loves emerge?

The mythic guardians are the heralds of your dreams;

They soothe your pain, and treasure life’s gleams.

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?

The verse on which our smiles emerge?

The heralds of your verse daydream our peace;

They glorify and recite the paroles of ease.

Have you ever composed ‘the verse’?

The verse by which our destinies emerge?

The heralds of ballads treasure our dreams;

The verse of creation recites the odyssey of deeds.

Ryan Afreen

Williams Cullen Bryant High School

LEAVE HER ALONE

I remember sleeping over at your house, our innocence

We aren’t so innocent anymore.

I remember playing with dolls and raiding the fridge for food

We were so young.

I remember the way he looked, so strong and tall

There was something wrong with his face.

I remember how he was always a little too rough with you, your expression

Why couldn’t he leave you alone?

I remember how he held you down, and there was screaming

I wonder which one of us was screaming the loudest.

I remember how I threw things at him, and he wouldn’t stop

What was he doing to you?

I remember running to your grandmother, she wouldn’t get off the phone

First time I’ve ever cursed at an adult.

I remember hearing his heavy steps coming towards me, rapidly approaching

May God protect me.

I remember feeling so relieved he was off you, even as he screamed at me

You cried as I screamed back at him, willing to protect you with my life.

I remember.

Do you?

Anastassia Amato-La Hoz

City College Academy of the Arts

MILD SCOLIOSIS

i fumble to reach

the bend in my spine

like your hands

when they first met

the touch of my back;

i reach but cannot find.

36 degrees off kilt and

rising,

my love as scoliosis:

x-rays showing hips

and chest

clearly as you see them

when you call me beautiful

and hold me like vertebrae

hold my lumbar in curves

every year

another degree of love

until gravity pulls me

down

completely into you.

Sarah Barlow-Ochshorn

Hunter College High School

HOW TO BE A BLACK GIRL

I am a Black girl.

I have been for a few years now

so, I feel like I have

a little knowledge of what it’s like to be one.

When being a black girl,

at approximately age five,

YOU MUST

and I cannot stress this enough,

NEVER EVER,

move your head while your mom

slowly drags the hot comb down your nape,

you will burn yourself.

Don’t touch your hair.

You will get popped.

Don’t go to the bathroom for too long

to check out your hair.

You will get yelled at.

When being a black girl

at approximately age thirteen.

You must be

comfortable, confident.

You must not limit the times

you sway your hips

or roll your eyes.

You are a black girl

with an attitude that

speak words that some can’t comprehend

but some don’t understand a lot of things.

They don’t know about your body

They don’t know about your

heart being as big as your ass.

They don’t know that your ass

doesn’t have to be big

to be a black girl.

They’ll never know what it’s like

to wonder at seven why

your Native American grandma

didn’t pass down her cotton like hair.

And why you were stuck with

hair from the one who picked it.

They’ve never felt how it feels to

finally love yourself enough

to wear your fro how you like it

and finally be free.

Taliyah Bradford

NYC iSchool

LOVE

It’s like metal.

No trust, always suspicious

My phone rings and you feel the competition.

Now our love has rusted

and our combined hearts that were tighter

then a tree’s roots in the ground

have disintegrated.

Your tears made a river going down

a different path than what we had

discussed for us.

I sit back and watch the little shreds of love we had

wash away like my grandmother’s ashes

in Coney Island

Justin Cervantes

James Baldwin H.S.

WRONG

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I feel I grew up wrong.  I was black and I didn’t think white people  Were the bad guys.  I thought black people were.  I feel I grew up wrong.  I didn’t want Jays.  Or Lebrons.  I wanted light up Batman shoes.  I feel I grew up wrong.  I had no black struggle.  I never had to fight for my life.  My problems were the ones in my textbook.  I grew up wrong.  Black people didn’t like me, I was too white.  White people understood why I spoke and I  laughed and joked like them.  I am a product of perfected assimilation.  I grew up wrong.  I wasn’t accepted by those of my color and felt  comfortable with the opposite.  I grew up wrong.  I didn’t smoke.  Or like guns  Or sex at 8 or 9  I grew up wrong  I achieved, and no white man beat me down | I grew up wrong  I was never cheated by a black man  or punched by a black woman  I grew up wrong  I speak the way I do  I sound the way I do  I’ll eat sushi before fried chicken  I grew up wrong  I don’t like corn bread  or spicy food  I. grew. up. wrong.  My friends were white because the black ones  judged me.  My teachers were white because I never went  to black schools.  I can’t relate to police brutality because I was  never judged by an officer before.  But I’ve faced racism from more black people than white.  I grew up wrong.  I was happy, and settled in a white community.  I have assimilated and I am comfortable.  I am –  what I am  and I am what they call  …  wrong |

Hannah Coleman

NYC iSchool

LOST AND FOUND

he is twelve and he is lost

the once milky pale walls

that surround him

have turned into patches of a galaxy

purple, blue, and yellow blooms across those walls

violence takes up residence in his mind

he is twelve and his parents are colliding planets

they don’t think they break anything but themselves

but the debris breaks off and hits him

more shades of color show up on his walls

the once sunshine smile that he wore

has turned into a cloudy day

rain falls from those saturated clouds

confusion consumes his mind

he is twelve and he wonders

‘why?’

‘why me?’

‘why not them?’

the questions never solve anything

at some point

he stops asking

a few years fly by

he is now fifteen

and he is the earth

the lost is now found

there is nothing left in his mind.

Ivy Fan

Staten Island Technical High School

MELANIN BEAUTY

She’s team swirl, black beauty with a firm booty

brown sugar, lavender, and lace

realizes that there’s not many black love around.

Her melanin shows and it’s gorgeous as her mind,

Brown sugar, lavender, and lace

at her own pace she finds inner peace

realizing black is gorgeous. Skin deep. no stereotype. no shaming.

just you, me, anybody embracing our Melanin Beauty.

Bejoux Soleil Glemaud

The High School of Fashion Industries

UNTITLED

I’m just trying to run,

away from all these guns,

away from all these nuns,

God forgive me for all my sins,

and all the places that I’ve been.

You can’t replace, you can’t retrace

The demons entering my soul,

I ran off, I kicked the goal

I have a lot of cookies in the jar,

I know I’m going to get far,

I’m jumping on these bars,

I’m sliding through these cars.

Education gets me far,

And a brick would make me fall

Either 10 feet deep or behind those bars.

Dennis Gonzalez

James Baldwin H.S.

DEVIL (IS IN THE DETAILS)

I wrote a novel with my friends (on my shoulder, the devil)

About an angel in the sky (and in the earth, the devil)

In my day dreams I fly on wings of ebony

Yet for that wish I wouldn’t die (but strike a deal with the devil)

Why, I hear Lucifer runs a spry business below

One day I’d like to drink vintage wine barrels dry (with the devil)

Fingers blister and sweat and try to grip

The pencil tighter as I sketch a blood-red tie (on the devil)

As I sit at my desk I often wonder why the stars

That line night’s veil resemble haunted eyes (like those of the devil)

I dream and let the seraphim dye my thoughts with colors cool to the touch

But startle awake as I pry my eyes away from fiery visions (remnants of the devil)

Music is a thing of beauty, its notes defy reason and launch into the orbit of fantasy

I bet Hell’s standby soundtrack is smooth jazz (approved by the devil)

Some are quick to deny the flaws of angels

They find the need to cry (out against the devil)

I wish to apply the red paint of sin across the cheeks of seraphim

To let them savour the life only human folly can supply (sullied by the devil)

An image refused to shy away, overtaking my mind

Sharp teeth, sly eyes, blood pitch like tar (runs in the veins of the devil)

Do my words reach you, or shall you just focus on the rhyme of my words

Not the beat in my heart as it thumps like a drum in time (to the beat of the devil)

Your claims fail to belie your thoughts, you silly marionette, I can see though your disguise

The puppet strings wrapped slyly ‘round your neck, cinching tighter (in the hands of the devil)

My name means “Heaven’s Dew” in lullaby Hebrew

A child of God who won’t deny her dream (of dancing with the devil).

Talia Gushchina

Stuyvesant High School

I LISTEN

She tells me of her new fangled boots, and how they’ll wow all of her friends.

She speaks fondly of Catherine, but loathes Lucianne as if she wished upon her a thousand curses.

Anyone by Lucianne, her ex-lab partner and former acquaintance, who supposedly “knows exactly what she does when she does it.”

Of course,

I,

Being only a mere listener,

Listen and never speak.

She sneaks her phone under her table and texts me between classes,

About how she swears Lucianne is always staring at her and how she can pick a fight any day, she swears.

But her teacher catches her and only adds to the fuel she burns against Lucianne’s existence.

Obviously,

I,

Being only a mere listener,

Listen and never speak.

Oh she’s serious now, Lucianne has crossed the line.

Copying her style, wearing the same boots that she took so much time out to find,

and spent all her allowance on?

After school she describes her quick but daring rendezvous with little Lucianne, and promises she took care of everything.

Evidently,

I,

Being only a mere listener,

Listen and never speak.

I’m in the interrogation room.

“What do you know about Ms. Lucianne?” he asks me, looking as if the answer to this question could predict my near future.

I stare mildly. What did I do? Accomplice? What does that even mean? I fail to see

how I could plan any part of this shenanigan they call a crime.

Sadly,

I,

Behind metal bars,

Being only a mere listener,

Listen and never speak.

Quiann King

Brooklyn Technical High School

DO NOT LIVE BEHIND A FAÇADE

Do not live behind a façade

Waking up to sip the bitter embrace

Allow your identity to pervade

The tears are rusting for more than a decade

Alienation is suffocating, in the absence of grace

Do not live behind a façade

Why live life as a masquerade?

Remove you costume and leave it in outer space

Allow your identity to pervade

Open your treasure chest, time will fade

Ignite the past and leave no blueprint trace

Do not live behind a façade

A waterfall of gold will cascade

Over your once timorous, flower bud, face

Allow your identity to pervade

Sis, you are not odd, be freshly squeezed lemonade

Curtains up, the show is on, own your place

Do not live behind a façade

Allow your identity to pervade

Tatijana Lonic

William Cullen Bryant High School

17 AS A STUDY

The mermaidian compromise is her senior thesis.

Give up one world for another and Mikhail and I would rather be arguing than helping but you are supposed to love your friends not just jack off to them so we fold.

According to Chelsea I am an ethnic centaur: my horse in Ecuador, my mouth in America. Her abstract is that I cry whenever I eat mangoes because THOSE COULD HAVE BEEN MY HANDS CRADLING THEM FROM TREES. MY SHRUNKEN STOMACH, MY LEATHER SKIN. Mikhail holds me and pretends not to hear me moan sañgre de mis hijos, mi salvador, ayuda Mikhail calls himself reborn but he weeps in the shower with me during race riots with his shadow skin patchy white. To me he is a tamed owl, to him I am a orphan baby sparrow. Similar but not enough to bond over it.

Chelsea sweet Chelsea gets an A written in our tears.

Deyanira Mendez

The Bronx High School of Science

AVOID MY EYES

She told me she would stand for me, poor and tempest tossed

Almighty claiming who I could be, not knowing who I’ve lost

Standing on the pedestal that her believers paid for

Preaching nothing but her lies of a torch and golden door

Elle parle “Je t’aime”

Elle parle “Je l’aime”

Mais elle n’a pas fait quelque chose

Elle dit “Tu sais que je suis ici”

Elle dit “Quand J’ai fini je vais avoir reussi”

Mais elle a rompu tout les promesses qu’elle a fait

Thinking I could make it in this melting pot of dreams

But all that I could hope for now is to become unseen

All the hate and brutality takes everyone from thee

I am stumped before I speak and no power comes to me

Je regrette que je croyais vos mensonges

Parce qu’ils m’a donne l’espoir bientôt enlevé

Je dis au revoir a vous et votre porte d’ore

Alors, je te hais de tous mon coeur

So look not at me, for you are a cold copper culprit

And my stare carries the immensity to push you off your pulpit

Don’t cover up your deception with promises in time

Just avoid my eyes, as I will avoid thine

French Translations

She speaks “I love you”

She speaks, “I like him”

But she did not do anything

She says “You know that I am here”

She says “When I finish, I will have succeeded”

But she broke every promise she made

I regret that I believed your lies

Because they gave me hope, soon taken away

I say good bye to you and your golden door

So, I hate you with all of my heart

Sophia Naranjo

Fiorello H. LaGuardia

FIREFLIES

Love is no definable quality.

Like air

it feeds into our system.

We can’t see it

We can’t hear it

But we feel it.

When it is there

and when it is not.

Often we try so hard

to label it

calculate it

Find a formula

with which to trap it.

Like a firefly

in a jar.

Precious and delicate.

We try so hard

to keep it that

it so often suffocates.

We are children

playing with lives

dropping them

breaking them

but we don’t know

any better.

Nina Penny

NYC iSchool

ALL I HAD WAS FOUR MINUTES

7:09

the sun

rolls over the horizon

peeks out through a legion of trees

behind a chasm of cement and brick and mortar

breathes life into the few lonely blades of grass

huddled together

in the crack

on the sidewalk

they have survived the night

7:10

dancing quietly along avenues

so as not to wake children holding

onto soon-forgotten dreams

past the iron gate

up the side of the building

into a dark room dressed in blues and whites

7:11

golden light spills through

gilding every surface

buttery waves lap over each other

a perfect shade of oblivion

7:12

this moment

spilling away yes,

if my walls

would hold

i think i could be happy

Ilene Pua

Hunter College High School

SOMETIMES SHE IS

The black silhouette of a woman

pressed lightly against the sun

or

the black bird in flight

against the moonlight

At times she is

the purple of a bruise,

then the white of fresh paper.

A tulip, then a rose.

A paintbrush, then a pen.

Very frequently she is

the burning sensation on my face

or

the rumbling in my stomach

She can be tears of all sorts

But on most occasions

she is a girl.

A smooth caramel complexion.

Dark pools of brown that catch me staring.

Interlocking curls liable to changing shape.

Long digits, slender hands and a warm touch.

A pearly set of teeth I see often.

Beautiful,

to say the least.

This is when I like her best

Kevin Ramirez

HSMSE at City College of New York

UNTITLED

You stand in front of the mirror, point out each flaw printed on your beautiful body.

Your eyes shut, breathing steadily to stop the voices from poisoning your mind.

You say you have thunder thighs;

That if they were smaller you’d be better, you’d be noticed.

I say you’re lucky.

Thunder is powerful, bringing man weeping to his knees.

You say your stomach covers your beauty

I say no, you’re just blind to see the beauty.

You cringe at the sight of your stretch marks.

You are a piece of art

Those are the extra lines you needed when you were made to become as beautiful as you are now.

Remember, we are stitched with flaws and insecurities but each stitch is perfect.

Zainab Rehman

James Madison High School

HOPE

What can it not be but dusk’s ex-lover,

dawn painted on your lips as you crave the echo of morning’s solitude.

Like a lost child weeping in your arms,

your warmth a cradle of belief, undefined, unknown,

the last resort in relapses of uncertainty.

Hope is the calling of your name

in the middle of some crowded sidewalk.

The tears spent and wasted in toxic bottles,

cupped in your hands after a night’s torment,

The tender way you fold your fingers together,

the fall of the moon and the rise of the sun.

It is in the lines of your palms,

filled between every second of your heartbeat,

in the hesitant smile reflected in the bottom of a wine glass,

settled in the curve of your lips.

Painted on like lipstick or chapstick,

to be washed off and reapplied,

because it’s that easy.

Hope is

Easy to forget, easy to remember, easy to hide

easy to love

There hope comes in the old friend of too many yesterdays,

who gives you his number,

and tells you it’s okay, I’m here

like you’re the lost child weeping in their arms,

their warmth a cradle of belief, undefined, unknown,

but this time there is certainty

in the bright phone light that wakes you up at 2AM.

Katherine Rijo

City College Academy of the Arts

LOST IN OLD THOUGHTS

The day my grandfather died,

I thought it was a lie.

It changed my \*\*\* life,

now I won’t believe my eyes.

And every tear that I cry,

I hate it with a passion.

Every frown every smile,

just feels like it has no ration.

Ever since that \*\*\*\* day

I can’t explain how \*\*\* has changed.

Every sentence every page

all seems to feel the \*\*\* same.

For the depression who’s to blame,

I been through too much to gain

a bunch of bull\*\*\* and some fame

I’m tryna’ gain a little fame,

And \*\*\*…

After a loss it’s really hard to move on.

All the struggles all the fighting just to climb over walls.

And when you reach where you want, you gotta build on your own.

Your safest crowd is alone,

and your toughest armor your bones.

You talk louder to feel stronger, prouder looking bold

And \*\*\* you stand taller when you’re really farther from your home.

I don’t wanna age and \*\*\* I don’t wanna grow old

So for now I’m just a teen typing something on his phone…

Justin Rodriguez

High School for Law & Public Service

21

They say that the soul weighs 21 grams.

21 grams of guilt.

21 grams of a girl who lives in an apartment too small to contain her broken dreams

There is nothing else to do but get drunk off pain

21 grams of drugs.

They say that the soul weighs 21 grams.

But something it feels like my soul weighs 42 grams

If I could unlock the feelings I hid away, there would be nothing left of me

Maybe then, I would be weightless. I always wondered what it would be

to fly like a balloon in the sky

21 cannons for a soldier that died before she got the chance to live.

Katelyn Sasson

Edward R. Murrow High School

YONDER FLAME

Dusk

Has plunged

The orange

Sun beneath the

Shadowed hills beyond.

Above the darkest bulge

There spreads a godly fire.

I am nothing to this sublime,

And yet now I am living witness –

Above the superficial and common!

Still, like all joyous ticks, the fire

Begins to fade, submitting to

The deep blue of any eve.

And at last, when just the

Embers’ glow remains

Upon hill-tops,

Orange warmth

Submits

Night.

Sidney Slon

High School for Math Science and Engineering

BLACK DON’T CRACK

Arthritis makes a comfortable home within the crevices of my mother’s bones,

cheeks stay on fleek though,

skin stay on fleek though,

what are wrinkles to black bodies?

they ask

“How?”

I say,

“Black don’t crack. Our combs do.”

Old white guys seek to refute my contention,

The “scientists” carry catalysts for experiments in the palm of their hands,

they mock the cross,

Focus on graph,

Scattered plots on a x and y coordinate plane,

Focus gun,

Focus catalyst on black point,

Point to graph,

Shoot.

A bullet erupts from the magma chamber of a volcano,

Spews itself on black skin,

The skin don’t crack,

It just opens,

Fold within itself,

Does not fight foreign invader.

Immune system sees black thing coming from another black thing entering a black body,

cannot tell the different between you and bullet,

both look the same.

Redo your experiment,

this just trial and error, trial and error.

Observation,

This is not the first time something has entered a black body without permission.

This is not the first time something has tried to colonize a land without permission.

This is not the first time something has demanded space without permission.

You called yourself cracker.

snapped wrists to crack whip on back of black,

But black skin don’t crack

it just blisters and swells like swollen feet,

Men and women dance the dance of melanin,

They waltz across mahogany floors with a grim reaper,

Wrinkles have no place on their skin.

“scientists” and their daughters want to look young too,

They want some of our hereditary genes,

but don’t have enough ass to fit into it,

Not enough stomach to stomach tainted water.

You ask Jesus,

a black man,

to take his black hands and turn water into wine.

Do not cringe at the aftertaste of blood,

the hands remember,

Cause the skin ain’t ever gonna crack,

not when it done felt the bite of a whip,

the bullet of a volcano,

Black skin,

laugh

and,

stretch

and,

bleed,

and,

bleed some more,

screams,

What is a crack?

a wrinkle to skin that is just another variable burning in a scientific experiment?

Just another animal being tested on in a tuskegee experiment

When scientists gave shots of syphilis to their focus group,

This is not the first time something has entered a black body without permission,

Dear “scientists”,

We could show you how black skin refuses to crack,

if you let us die,

of old age, first.

Perda Smith

Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics High School

WHAT’S UP

Plug the amplifier, why don’t you

Pluck your guitar for everyone to hear and

Belt all your little doubts and worms that are

Drilling into your head with a guttural voice.

Mama always said, life isn’t fair

And it sure as hell isn’t because even if I eat

All those sickly beryl-toned vegetables my

Troubles always find a way back to me.

People ask, what’s up and it’s a terrible

Way to start a conversation because

It’s another way of saying, hey you there

I’m pretending I care but I truly honestly don’t.

Plug in the amplifier, why don’t you

Carol and croon your misfortunes and

See who really hears and not just listens

To those meaningless battle hymns.

The lady in the suit asks me,

What’s your biggest weakness and

I laugh to myself because I have absolutely

No place to start so I tell her it’s my vision.

Ink prints on a blank paper mean

Nothing to me at all I don’t see anything

And I don’t feel anything and I can only hear

The incessant sound of your complaints.

Plug in the amplifier, why don’t you

Tell the world about your toils and tussles and

Go ahead; you can talk back to me because

I only asked you, what’s up.

Sophia Xian

The Bronx High School of Science

PICTURE THIS:

two teenagers kissing in a congested train cart during rush hour,

and not a single bystander looks up from his newspaper.

except, the teenagers are both girls and this never actually happens.

instead, we are standing in silence on our morning train ride,

the bystanders not looking up from their newspapers because you

are studying for a geometry test while I am listening to “I would

definitely date you if you were a boy” play repeatedly in my head

and looking at you,

stupidly

Sylvia Yu

Stuyvesant High School

**Third Prize**

YELLOW FEVER

We are the forgotten race too busy chasing after the American Dream

Creating doctors lawyers engineers

Constructing our lives and walking up the ladder of A’s

Climbing to success: the bamboo ceiling

We built your railroads that snake across this land

While you danced to the music of a fat Korean man horse-trotting into global consciousness

As if you needed something else to make fun of us besides our music

Our smelly food and dirty streets

Choppy accents and loud words that sound rude

Our version of “how’s the weather?” is “have you eaten yet?”

But you respond, “not dogs and cats, if that’s what you mean”

Well I can tell you that I’ve never eaten a dog or a cat

But I like frog and eel jellyfish pork belly pig ear duck tongue chicken feet

And you’re grossed out but still delirious with yellow fever

Our women so quiet so polite respectful dignified

Making congee with thousand year old eggs when we’re sick

Mom’s special recipe not like that chicken noodle soup you have

Call me disgusting one more time as you eat dry chicken breast

Tastes like death

My ancestors sit on a pile of burned paper money

Because we never stop taking care of older generations they gave us life

And you’re complaining that your mom won’t give you an iPhone

While my mom is beating me with the same broomstick she uses to sweep the graves

Hoping maybe my ancestors will smack some sense into me

You call it child abuse, we call it discipline

You criticize our factories striving for perfection

Same beautiful dark hair yellow skin small eyes seeing

That sweatshops and manufactured idols are ours and

We make your way of life tables chairs and the pedestal you’re on

As we sweat blood dripping in our rice fields with the sun beating on our backs

We feed our families while you feed your ego

Thank you for ignoring us liberals speaking of equality

You want diversity but you don’t want us, your

“Model minority”

Wow thanks didn’t know too much of a good thing was bad

We are silent because politics are dirty it’s part of our culture to find clean jobs

We are quiet because we don’t want to make trouble just a living

We are voiceless because we made the box and you took our sound

We are here.

Angie Liao

Hunter College High School

THE LOWER EAST SIDE

I know where I should be

But here is where I am

On the corner of Canal street

Screeches from the slides of

Plastic wheels against the sidewalk

Provoke an aggressive, foreign dialogue

Unknown by me, or any of us.

Pops and scrapes emit from

The marriage of the asphalt

To the tails of our boards

And Elizabeth Street cries.

Children sit on the sidelines

In awe

Because, gravity doesn’t seem to apply to us

And we just can’t seem to fall hard enough

But

I’d like to think that at least one of them though to themselves

“I want to float too.”

Reshawn Smith

The James Baldwin School

**Second Prize**

AMERICAN WRITER

I saw my prince on the train the other day

he had on a salesman’s hat

and a suitcase in one hand and his hair

was buzzed off, like a shorn monk’s, and

he hadn’t showered in three days and

no one would sit next to him because his jeans

were covered with mud stains and ground coffee

I didn’t touch him. I didn’t say anything to him

I only watched him open his suitcase and take

out a notebook and a ballpoint pen. He

shook the pen three times to get the ink flowing

and he wrote with a skeleton hand

wearing skin as his fur coat and he

didn’t beg didn’t swear didn’t preach

not like those puffed-up intellectuals on their gilded seats

He only wrote. About what, I don’t know. About

whom or where or when I don’t know, only

I still see that notebook in my mind’s eye, crinkled

with last night’s rain and stained brown from

leather and the beer he bought with

his last paycheck and this is how

he decided to kill himself, not by

dicing himself into the pigeons’ next meal

or letting the East River break his neck but

by writing about *beautiful*

(her, always her)

and maybe he finally let go of the woman

who broke his heart—wasn’t that what it

always came down to, a woman? wasn’t that

the life of every great artist, wasn’t this man

a great artist—he was born, he fell in love,

he was scorned, he created the next great American

novel/play/poem/painting/photograph

his lackluster sex life defining an entire generation

he—labeled ocean after the hurricane—was

a man who had given up on magnificence and youth

how he slumped, like the bullet had already reached

his spine, how he scribbled, like he had mere

minutes to live, how he moaned and drooled

and begged for mercy, giving his audience the ultimate show

well, old poets knew how to speak grand

their words covered vast expanses of untamed land but

modern poets do well if they can capture a single

moment of their lives, and if they do it stays

with them, trapped, and he didn’t have a single

clue what he was doing. I saved him from hell

by watching him, giving him a reason to

live, turning him into an animal

but better animal than inanimate

I don’t know if I’ll ever see him again

my prince, my pauper, my muse lost to

the dregs of New York coffee. goodbye, goodbye—

(even though she broke you

don’t let her go, please

never let her go)

Julia Hou

Stuyvesant High School

GRAVITY WAVES OR WHAT I LEARNED IN PHYSICS CLASS ON WEDNESDAY

The world it spins and spins and we are still

Feeling not the speed at which we rotate

Freely moving captives of time’s will

A raven and a girl sit on a hill

Whilst the lost souls use stars to navigate

The world it spins and spins and they are still

From the midst of silence comes the trill

Of a bird and his mother who migrate

Freely flying captives of time’s will

A poet wakes and gets paper and quill

And writes like the morning will not wait

The world it spins and spins and does not still

On Christmas day, rituals they fulfill

Like clockwork comes the day children await

Fanciful notions of our human will

The universe does good and it does ill

And with every destruction it creates

The world it spins and spins and yet we’re still

Freely moving captives of time’s will

Sofia Grochowski

Staten Island Technical High School

**First Prize**

50 YEARS

He spends his summers with twigs between his teeth

And stones to suck.

He hand-cuts jeans to make Jean-shorts

And owns a velvet chair to watch the Olympics in.

He never speaks of what he’s seen

Makes him a big man,

Makes him a good ol’ old man

He slurps tomato sauce from penne

He sees Beautiful Dancing Girls

He talks with his son in-law in earnest

about what is in value

and he sleeps in a fabric-softener cave

To soothe his back pain.

His wrinkles shut his eyes for him,

and he is free to dream of reaching across the sheets

To choke his wife.

He wakes up at dawn

To hear floorboards creak

and lift 2-pounders.

He marks time in kumquat seasons

And waits for the place

Where God is unshut.

She spends her winters chopped up under shuttered pill-splitters

And mints to chew.

She hems peeled onions

and owns socialist pearls from six-feet-under holy land

She only speaks of what she’s seen

Makes her a happy woman,

Makes her a good ol’ vain woman.

She is a prodigal gardener,

spitting into soil to make it sing.

She does handstands in the two-by-two patio,

gravel from the zen garden seeking blood from her palms,

and fat rolling down from her hips to her eyes,

shutting them close

So she is free to dream of reaching across the blankets

to maul her husband.

She calls her daughter and speaks for three hours,

inventing a language of codes,

the conversion of babbling to pleading,

telling the world that she is misunderstood,

that she loves, and would love to love.

She wakes at noon

to sleep

And marks time in breast-strokes

She sits in the garden to eat poppy seed cake,

And smiles up at the heavens,

waiting for the moment

when the Moon smiles back.

Hillel Rosenshine

The Bronx High School of Science

**Foreign Language Award**

红颜吟

1。儿时

绿林中，

双手抚小溪，

面露俏皮笑。

东阳升，

照明春姿色，

大地百花开。

2。少女

冬夜长，

抬头望圆月，

知寒而不悟。

常痴迷，

俘获一人心，

白首不相离。

3。为人妻

心欢喜，

终得梦中郎，

红妆显娇艳。

蕾绽放，

春风轻缠绵，

梨花少飘泪。

4。为人母

担忧重，

育儿盼成龙，

持家辛酸泪。

丹秋烈，

密密枫叶中，

牵挂旧郎君。

5。老年

游梦境，

寻觅忆中人，

苦思家乡土。

海无界，

波浪震大地，

冲走人间悲。

*TRANSLATION:*

MAIDEN

1. Girlhood

In the crisp and refreshing forest,

she steps forward and holds

the leaping, playful stream

in her hands.

The streaming sunlight opens

a thousand blooms.

2. Youth

Admiring a pale paper moon,

she sees an incomprehensible sullenness

in the starless sky.

Long winter nights give way

to the secret prayers in her heart.

3. Marriage

Her joy is as brilliant as

the vibrant scarlet of her garments.

A breeze gently carries

the tender petals of pear blossoms.

4. Motherhood

Fatigued and heady with expectation,

she stands alone amidst the autumn,

thoughts lingering on

loves in better times.

5. Senescence

A lone traveler in her dreams,

Searching for those she once knew,

Places once loved.

A broken, cleansing tide pounds the earth,

washing away the bitterness.

Alison Zhao

Hunter College High School

VIOLE

Ho intrecciato viole tenue nei suoi capelli

Sognava in colore, colori che illuminerebbero una persona cieca

E quando professavo il mio amore saffico, incendiavo un fuoco nei suoi occhi

Come rosso si increspa attraverso pino verde nel avvento di autunno

Era una belleza russa, ancora non avrebbe partorito un figlio

Il suo tono era troppo caustico e il suo sorriso troppo ironico

Non apprezzava i dolci che avrei offerto, che è strana

Le sue labbra fragole erano più dolce delle memorie affezionate che ho di lei

L’ho perso in mezzo del mio passione per un’altro

Per cui posso scrivere similmente

*TRANSLATION:*

I braided pale violets into her flaxen hair

She dreamt in color, colors to enlighten a blind person

And when I professed my Sapphic love, I set a fire in her eyes

Like how red ripples through pine green in the advent of autumn

She was a Russian beauty, yet she could never bear a child

Her tone was too caustic and her smile too sarcastic

She disliked the sweets I would proffer, which is strange

Her strawberry lips were sweeter than the fond memories I have of her

For I lost her in the midst of my throes of passion for another

For whom I can write similarly

Nadia Salahuddin

The Bronx High School of Science